

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

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L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 AID-05 /093 W

-----001480 231721Z /43

O R 170900Z FEB 78

FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 658

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANNA

USMISSION USUN NY

S E C R E T DJIBOUTI 199

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PDEV, PDIP, MOPS, ASEC, DJ, SA, ET

SUBJ: SULTAN ALI MIRAH RETURN TO DJIBOUTI SEEN AS SERIOUS

DESTABILIZING FACTOR

1. SUMMARY. SINCE HIS FLIGHT FROM ETHIOPIA THREE YEARS AGO, ALI MIRAH HANFARY, SULTAN OF THE AFAR REGION OF RAHEITA, HAS SEARCHED FOR SUPPORT FOR HIS RETURN TO ETHIOPIA. IN TURN, HE HAS BEEN USED BY OTHER COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY SAUDI ARABIA, AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR CREATING TROUBLE FOR THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE EASTERN PART OF THAT COUNTRY. ALI MIRAH'S ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO VISIT DJIBOUTI FROM HIS EXILE HAVEN AT JIDDA THREATENS TO COMPLICATE SERIOUSLY THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT'S

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INTENTIONS TO BRING ETHNIC PEACE TO THE COUNTRY AS WELL AS ITS EFFORTS TO MEND RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA. THE DJIBOUTI PRIME MINISTER AND FRENCH AMBASSADOR ASK OUR ASSISTANCE IN PERSUADING THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT TO ENCOURAGE ALI MIRAH TO DELAY HIS VISIT UNTIL MORE PROPITIOUS TIME. SUPPORT TO THIS REQUEST IS ENCOURAGED.

2. WHEN KNOWLEDGE OF SULTAN ALI MIRAH'S PLAN TO CREATE AN

INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ENTITY GROUPING TOGETHER THE AFAR ETHNIC GROUPS IN ERITERA, THE AWASH VALLEY AND DJIBOUTI BECAME KNOWN TO THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES IN 1974, THE SULTAN WAS CHASED FROM THE COUNTRY AND MANY OF HIS FOLLOWERS WERE BRUTALLY SUBDUED BY ETHIOPIAN FORCES. HE FIRST TOOK REFUGE IN DJIBOUTI, BUT THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES IN THE TERRITORY OF AFARS AND ISSAS, SOON REQUIRED HIM TO LEAVE. SINCE THAT TIME, HE HAS RESIDED IN JIDDA, WHILE HIS TWO SONS HAVE CARRIED ON A DESULTORY AND MANIFESTLY UNSUCCESSFUL MILITARY CAMPAIGN, WITH SOMALI SUPPORT, AIMED PRIMARILY AGAINST THE ASSAB-ADDIS ABABA ROAD.

3. THE ETHIOPIAN REACTION TO THE ALI MIRAH CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN THE COMMITMENT OF SOME TROOPS TO GUARD THE ASSAB ROAD AND THE ARMING OF A LOYAL AFAR MAQUIS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF FORMER DJIBOUTI MINISTER OF JUSTICE, CHEHEM DAOUD CHEHEM. THIS GROUP HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN LOCATING ARMS CACHES IN ETHIOPIA BELONGING TO THE RELATIVELY SMALL GROUP OF SUPPORTERS FOLLOWING ALI MIRAH'S SONS. IT HAS ALSO BEEN USED TO SUPPORT MPL (MOUVEMENT POPULAIRE DE LIBERATION DE DJIBOUTI) ELEMENTS TRAINED IN SUBVERSION AND TERRORISM IN ETHIOPIA FOR USE IN DJIBOUTI. OF THE TWO COMPETING AFAR GROUPS, IT IS THE GROUP LED BY CHEHEM DAOUD WHICH HAS THE GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR CREATING DISSENSION IN DJIBOUTI REPUBLIC.

4. PART OF PRIME MINISTER ABDALLAH KAMIL'S PLAN FOR REUNIFYING THE FEUDING ETHNIC GROUPS IN DJIBOUTI IS TO ENTICE CHEHEM  
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DAOUD TO RETURN TO DJIBOUTI AND TO INTEGRATE AS MANY OF HIS MPL PARTISANS INTO THE DJIBOUTI NATIONAL ARMY. WHEN ABDALLAH KAMIL WAS IN ADDIS ABABA IN DECEMBER 1977, HE MET WITH CHEHEM DAOUD ON TWO OCCASSIONS, DESPITE EFFORTS BY ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES TO FRUSTRATE SUCH A MEETING. HE LEARNED THAT CHEHEM DAOUD WAS UNDER ATTACK BY CERTAIN EPMG ELEMENTS BECAUSE OF HIS "CAPITALISTIC LEANINGS," AND THAT ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION, HE HAD BEEN ATTACKED BY A GOON SQUAD EVIDENTLY PUT UP TO THE TASK BY OFFICIAL ETHIOPIAN SOURCES. SINCE BECOMING PRIME MINISTER, ABDALLAH KAMIL HAS NAMED CHEHEM DAOUD'S BROTHER, MOHAMED DAOUD CHEHEM AS HIS CHEF DE CABINET AND CONTINUES TO MAKE GESTURES INDICATING THE INTEREST OF THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT IN EXTENDING AN OLIVE BRANCH TO DISSIDENT AFAR ELEMENTS. ABDALLAH KAMIL BELIEVES THAT HE MAY BE SUCCESSFUL IN PERFORMING THE DELICATE OPERATION OF NEUTRALIZING ETHIOPIAN SUPPORT OF AFAR DISSIDENTS IN DJIBOUTI. IN DISCUSSING THESE VARIOUS MATTERS WITH THE CHARGE ON 16 FEBRUARY, THE PRIME MINISTER INDICATED THAT HE HAS THE SOMEWHAT GRUDGING SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED IN HIS EFFORTS TO ASSUAGE AFAR RESENTMENT AT BEING LEFT OUT OF THE DJIBOUTI PUBLIC LIFE AND THE OVERWHELMING INFLUENCE OF THE SOMALIS IN DJIBOUTI. KAMIL IS CONVINCED THAT THE RETURN OF ALI MIRAH WILL BE VIEWED AS AN UNFRIENDLY ACT BY THE ETHIOPIANS AND WILL CANCEL OUT HIS

EFFORTS AT DOMESTIC UNIFICATION. PRIME MINISTER KAMIL REQUESTED OUR ASSISTANCE IN ATTEMPTING TO PUT OFF A POSSIBLE VISIT BY ALI MIRAH. BECAUSE AN ALI MIRAH VISIT COULD HAVE SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS ON THE PUBLIC SECURITY SIDE, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR MADE THE SAME REQUEST TO THE CHARGE ON THE EVENING OF 16 FEBRUARY.

5. IN THE MEANTIME, THE ETHIOPIAN EMBASSY IN DJIBOUTI LEARNED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ALI MIRAH VISIT. IN AN APPROACH TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR ON THE AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 16, ETHIOPIAN CHARGE MUSA YACIN ASKED FOR FRENCH SUPPORT TO FORESTALL AN ALI MIRAH VISIT, CHARACTERIZING SUCH A VISIT AS A "SERIOUS PROVOCATION" ON THE PART OF THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT, IF PERMITTED. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR INFORMED THE ETHIOPIAN THAT HE AGREED THAT THE VISIT WOULD NOT BE USEFUL, BUT THAT HE WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO  
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PREVENT SUCH A VISIT.

6. THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR IN DJIBOUTI INFORMED THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR ON 16 FEBRUARY THAT THE RETURN OF SULTAN ALI MIRAH TO DJIBOUTI WAS A PROJECT SUPPORTED BY PRINCE FAUD, AND THAT IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THE SULTAN WOULD RETURN TO DJIBOUTI BY A CIRCUITOUS ROUTE (PRESUMEDLY THRGH PARIS) IN APPROXIMATELY TEN DAYS. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD INFORM HIS GOVERNMENT OF THE CONCERNS WHICH THE ALI MIRAH VISIT HAD GENERATED IN DJIBOUTI. THERE IS INDICATION THAT SAUDIS LOOK AT ALI MIRAH RETURN AS CONTRIBUTION TO ETHNIC HARMONY IN DJIBOUTI.

7. THE FINAL FACTOR OF IMPORTANCE IN THE THICKENING SCENARIO IS THE CERTAINTY THAT THE ALI MIRAH VISIT IS BEING PUT TOGETHER AT THE BEHEST OF THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT. ITS SUPPORT FOR THE ALI MIRAH SONS HAS REPORTEDLY RECENTLY INCREASED. THE SOMALIS ARE AWARE THAT PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED HAS A LONG FRIENDSHIP WITH THE SULTAN, AND IF PRESSED, WOULD NOT DENY HIM ENTRY TO THE COUNTRY. PRIME MINISTER KAMIL TOLD CHARGE THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN UNTIL NOW COOL TO THE VISIT, BUT THAT HE COULD BE SWAYED BY SOMALI PRESSURES.

8. POST REQUESTS THAT SOME DELICATE WAY BE FOUND TO DISSUADE ALI MIRAH FROM RETURNING TO DJIBOUTI. IT IS CLEAR THAT ALI MIRAH VISIT TO DJIBOUTI AT THIS TIME WOULD ADD SERIOUS COMPLICATION TO OUR EFFORTS TO BRING PEACE TO HORN OF AFRICA AND TO SAFEGUARD DJIBOUTI INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALITY.  
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## Message Attributes

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